LETTERS

RESPECTING THE

American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions,

AND THE

AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,

BY

WILLIAM JAY.

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LETTER TO THE AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY.

New-York, Monday, February 14, 1853.

To Rev. R. S. Cook, Corresponding Secretary American Tract Society:

Reverend Sir:—I have been favored with your letter of the last month setting forth the pecuniary exigences of the American Tract Society, and suggesting to my "charitable consideration" a donation to its funds. Few persons hailed with more satisfaction than myself the establishment of your Society, or more cordially approved the truly Catholic principles on which it was founded. I long since became one of its Life Directors, and have frequently contributed to its funds. The professed object of the Society was to inculcate Christian faith and practice, and to a very great extent it has been faithful to its profession, and I doubt not that it has been largely instrumental in promoting the spiritual welfare of multitudes.

But the good effected by human agency is seldom without alloy, and for some years painful doubts have intruded themselves upon my mind, as to the propriety of the course pursued by the Society in regard to a most momentous subject. Against these doubts I have long struggled, and at times with success. But they have again and again returned with increased force, and they have been so entirely confirmed by some recent developments, that I am constrained to return a most reluctant denial to the application in your letter. I am well aware of the deep responsibility I assume in placing any obstacle, however slight, in the way of the Society. Of this responsibility, the pain I may give valued friends, and the obloquy I may draw upon myself from a very minor portion—I feel the infinitely greater weight of my responsibility even to my Maker, for withholding my aid from an agency that has effected so much for his glory and the good of man. This responsibility I have anxiously pondered, and have come to the conviction that I may not avoid it. The facts and reasons which have produced this conviction I will proceed to state. Should they be found insufficient to justify me, they will

tend to save others from the error into which I have fallen; and should they, on the other hand, be found valid, they may lead to salutary results.

The classification of sins into those of commission and omission is trite. All Scripture testifies that mere inaction has often incurred the Divine wrath. The Jewish priests, although sedulous in the routine of ceremonial duties, were denounced in the indignant language of inspiration as "dumb dogs," because they omitted to rebuke popular sins. In the account of the last judgment, those who are to "go away into everlasting punishment" are not condemned as heretics, nor as the perpetrators of crime, but as guilty of having omitted to administer to the necessities of Christ's afflicted and oppressed brethren.

You have by this time, Sir, anticipated that my charge against the Society is one of OMISSION. There is a giant, and in its influence an all-pervading sin in our land—a sin which is destroying the peace and happiness of millions, both for the life that is and for that which is to come; and which is hardening the hearts and paralyzing the consciences of many more by its reflective consequences. Yet the American Tract Society has publicly and officially announced through you, as its organ, that it does not intend to recognize even the existence of this sin!

About a year since, the ministers and delegates of the Congregational Union of Fox River, Illinois, addressed a very Christian letter to the Society. In this letter they very forcibly remark: "We feel sure that the time has come when the continued absence from the publications of your Society of all that relates to Slavery will be significant; that silence can no longer be neutrality or indifference: and that a tract literature which speaks less plainly of Slavery than of other specific evils will conduce to a defective, partial, and unsound morality."

In your official reply of 27th February, 1852, without letting a word escape your pen, acknowledging the sinfulness of American Slavery, you urge various reasons for not breaking the silence so long observed by the Society respecting human bondage. "It would seem a sacrifice of a greater to a lesser good to engage in the discussion of a topic already exhausted, with the likelihood of satisfying none, and with the certainty of alienating multitudes of our best friends," &c. Your publications, we are informed, must be of a character "calculated to meet the approbation *of all evangelical Christians*;" and you seem to think, that amid the anti-slavery agitation it is desirable "that *at least one* institution should move forward on the simple errand that brought the Saviour into the world—proclaiming Christ and him crucified," &c.; and you aver "that on no subject, probably, are evangelical Christians more at variance" than Slavery; and you conclude with declaring that "the course of duty seems plain before us to *adhere* as a Society to the simple gospel in its essential saving truths." The Union were not convinced by your arguments; on the contrary, they resolved that ere long no catholic Society of publication can well refuse to express anti-slavery truth in some of its various forms of moral or biblical argument, fact or sentiment; and to hasten this desired consummation they ordered the correspondence to be made public.

I am unable to reconcile the position assumed in your letter with the past action of the Society, or with the usually received ideas of Christian obligation. It seems your tracts must meet the approbation of all *evangelical* Christians. If we ask who these are, we shall be told, such as agree in maintaining the scriptural authority of certain abstract doctrines. But we all know that these same Christians differ widely on various questions of moral practice. You are not ignorant that evangelical wine and rumsellers and drinkers abound both in town and country; and yet your Society is lavish of its censures on them. It condemns the theatre and race-course, although not a few believers in the evangelical creed frequent both. You issue publications against dancing, and yet how many sons and daughters mingle in the waltz, in the presence and with the consent of their evangelical parents? You condemn travelling on the Sabbath, yet our Sunday steamboats and railcars are not without their evangelical passengers. You do not hesitate to rebuke gambling, yet evangelicals may be found at the card and the billiard-table. As far as I can judge, the publications of your Society have been in accordance with the rule you announce on few subjects, except that of human bondage and its attendant atrocities. I know not that in the twenty-seven years of its existence the Society has published a line intended to touch the conscience of an American slave-breeder or trader. On the contrary, especial care has been taken to EXPUNGE from your reprints every expression that could even imply a censure on our stupendous national iniquity. The Society has no hesitation in condemning cruelty, oppression, and injustice, but it shrinks with affright at the very idea of acknowledging that it is cruel, oppressive, and unjust, to reduce a *black* man to the condition of a beast of burden, to deny him legal marriage, and to sell him and his children to the highest bidder, in company with the beasts of the field. This extreme sensitiveness is shown in the alteration of a passage in your reprint of Gurney's essay on the habitual exercise of love to God. Gurney says: "If this love had always prevailed among professing Christians, where would have been the sword of the crusader? Where the African slave-trade? Where the odious system which permits to man a property in his fellow-men, and converts rational beings into marketable chattels?" (Page 142.) This was meat too strong for the digestion of the Society, and hence it was carefully diluted, so that it might be swallowed without producing the slightest nausea, as follows: "If this love had always prevailed among professing Christians, where would have been the sword of the crusader? *Where the tortures of the Inquisition?* Where every system of oppression and wrong by which he who has the power revels in luxury and ease at the expense of his fellow-men?" (Page 199.) It was an ingenious thought to turn upon the *Inquisition* Gurney's application of his subject to slave-traders and holders, and to lose sight of *property in man*, in indefinite generalities.

Your last Report, in announcing the reprint of the Memoir of Mary Lundie Duncan, tells us: "A few pages, which the Committee deemed of less interest to the general reader, or which alluded to *points of disagreement among evangelical Christians*, have been dropped." The *pages* dropped are indeed

few and unimportant, and seemed to have been dropped for the purpose of justifying the word "abridged" on the title-page. But the *passages* dropped are very significant. In her Diary for March 22, 1833, the following passage is *expunged* in the Society's edition, while every other word on the page is retained: "We have been lately much interested in the emancipation of slaves. I never heard eloquence more overpowering than that of George Thompson. I am most thankful that he has been raised up. Oh that the measure soon to be proposed in Parliament may be effectual!"

Poor Mary! The American Tract Society will not allow you to breathe a wish for West India emancipation by act of Parliament, nor to admire the eloquence of an anti-slavery lecturer. The biographer of this lovely and highly gifted saint remarks: "When George Thompson, the eloquent pleader for the abolition of slavery, was called to visit the United States, in the hope that his remarkable power of influencing the public mind might be beneficial there, we find the youthful philanthropist, whose ardent mind glowed with exalted sympathies, and felt an interest in loftier occupations than usually kindle the enthusiasm of girls of her age, embodying her desires for his success in the following verses." This paragraph and the lines they introduced are both EXPUNGED from your edition. A Broadway bookseller had already published an *unmutilated* copy of the book, but this religious Society, more sensitive than even *New-York* traffic to the good-will of the slaveholders, suppressed not merely the anti-slavery poetry, but the testimony of a mother to the philanthropic sentiments of her departed daughter! But the work of expurgation did not stop here. In Mary's Diary is the following entry: "August 1: Freedom has dawned this morning on the British colonies. (*No more degraded lower than the brutes—no more bowed down with suffering from which there is no redress,*) the sons of Africa have obtained the rights of fellow-subjects—the rights of man, the immortal creation of God. (*Now they may seek the sanctuary fearless of the lash—they may call their children their own.*) Hope will animate their hearts, and give vigor to their efforts. Oh for more holy men to show them the way of salvation! The Lord keep them from riot and idleness! They have been so little taught that HE only can avert confusion and tumult as the result of their joy. Some Christians there are among their number who will influence others. My poor fellow-travellers through life's short wilderness, may I meet with many of you in heaven, where even I can hope to dwell through the love of my risen Lord! There none will despise the negro whom Jesus Christ has pitied and redeemed."

The passages in italics and in parentheses are *expunged* in the Society's edition. Mary is permitted to announce that the negroes have become British subjects, to express her apprehensions of riot and idleness, confusion and tumult, as consequences of emancipation, and to indulge the hope of meeting negroes in heaven, where they will not be despised. But she is not permitted to allude to the cruelties and abominations to which these same negroes had been subjected. The expunged passages involve no doctrinal "points of disagreement among evangelical Christians." Why, then, were they stricken out? Because the same cruelties and enormities to which she alluded are

perpetrated at home, by evangelical Christians, who belong to and support the American Tract Society.

The Society will not venture the denial of the *truth* of the expunged assertions. It would surely not aver that American slave children *do* belong to their parents. It would be put to confusion by the solemn judicial affirmance of the validity of a bequest of a mother to one person, and of her *unborn* children to another. It would be confuted by the sale of children at auction, and in particular of a sale reported within the few last days, of a child three years old bringing $300 under the hammer; while a Southern paper adverts with pride to the high price of human flesh, as evidence of "our agricultural prosperity." Your Society, Sir, expunged Mary's assertions, not because they were untrue, but because they are now as true here as they were in the West Indies; and it is the policy of the Society to cover up and conceal whatever reflects odium on the "peculiar institution."

Your Committee tell us, in their last Report, that they "have never lost sight of their responsibilities to those of tender years;" and it seems they issue *The Child's Paper*, of which great numbers are circulated. Yet the responsibilities to children resting on the Committee permit them to expunge an expression likely to remind us that there are hundreds of thousands of children in our land who are mere articles of merchandize. These very responsibilities are, it seems, perfectly compatible with entire silence respecting the ignorance and degradation of this great multitude "of tender years." The Committee know that in some of our States even a free mother, if her complexion be dark, is by law liable to be scourged on her bare back, should she be caught teaching her little ones to read your *Child's Paper;* yet not a word of remonstrance escapes the American Tract Society! In the very last number of *The Child's Paper* I read that "there are between 10,000 and 12,000 children in the city of New-York who never enter a church or school, and who cannot read the Bible. . . . . Here are heathen at home; what is doing for them? . . . . . These children must be cared for." Indeed! And is it nothing to your Society that there are in our country about HALF A MILLION of little black heathen who are prevented by law from reading the Bible? These little heathen have souls as imperishable, destinies as momentous, as the white heathen in New-York. Must this half million be cared for? Ah! that is a "point of disagreement among evangelical Christians," and hence the Society must not even recognize the existence of children who do not belong to their parents.

Permit me now to ask your attention to the very different course pursued by the Society in regard to the traffic in the bones and sinews, the mind and soul of immortal MAN, and the traffic in intoxicating drinks. Between twenty and thirty of your tracts are devoted to the subject of intemperance in all its relations. It is curious to observe the desire of your writers to avail themselves of the arguments and illustrations furnished by slavery, and at the same time their extreme caution in avoiding all reference to *American* slavery. Where (even by implication) censure is cast on human bondage, it is human bondage in *other* countries than our own. In Tract No. 300, to the excuse of the distiller that he cannot sacrifice his property, conscience is

made to answer: "Suppose you were now in *Brazil*, and the owner of a large establishment to fit out slave-traders with handcuffs for the coast of *Africa*, and could not change your business without considerable pecuniary sacrifice, would you make the sacrifice, or would you keep your fires and hammers going?" In remonstrating against the cruelty of the traffic in rum, it is remarked: "If a man lives only to make a descent on the peaceful abodes of *Africa*, and to tear away parents from their weeping children, and husbands from their wives and homes, where is the man that will deem this a moral business?" "Other men will prey on unoffending *Africa*, and bear human sinews across the ocean to be sold. Have you a right to do it?" (No. 305.) Once more, speaking of the duty of reseuing the drunkard, it is asked: "What would you not do to pull a neighbor out of the water, or out of the fire, or to deliver him from *Algerine* captivity?" (No. 422.) So it seems the Society is at liberty to hold up as cruel and immoral the traffic in human flesh in Africa, Brazil, and Algiers, but not in *our own land*—that being a "point of disagreement among evangelical Christians."

And now, Sir, I ask you, on what evangelical principle does the Society condemn the *foreign* slave-trade? Is it because an act of Congress forbids it? The Society has not yet, I believe, like some of its patrons, elevated the lower above the higher law, and made the national statute-book the standard of right and wrong. Nor, indeed, can the advocates of the supremacy of the lower law maintain that an act of Congress can render immoral the conduct of Africans, Algerines, and Brazilians, when that conduct is in conformity with the laws of their respective countries. Is it, then, in reference to the higher law, the will of God revealed in his blessed gospel, that the *foreign* traffic is condemned? If so, then I ask to what divine precept is it opposed? Buying and selling and the exchange of commodities is essential to human society, and is no where condemned in God's Word. Why then, Sir, I ask in all seriousness, is it more immoral for an African to sell, or a Brazilian to buy men and women, than apes and parrots? Is it because men and women are not by the higher law subjects of commerce? Before you reply in the affirmative, remember that our laws, framed for the most part by evangelical Christians, expressly declare vast multitudes of men and women to be mere chattels, vendible articles. Said Henry Clay, on the floor of the Senate, vindicating property in man, "that is property which the law makes property." Now, every slave sold in Africa to a Brazilian merchant is property by the African law, and is granted, bargained, sold, and delivered by a title as valid as that ever received by Mr. Clay to one of his slaves. Again, then, I ask, why is the sale and purchase of a man in Africa most undoubtedly a heinous crime, while the immorality of the sale and purchase in Virginia of a fellow-countryman and perhaps a fellow-Christian, is such an abstruse question that the American Tract Society will not venture to approach its discussion? Can it be that your Society is silent on this traffic because it is sanctioned by human law? This can hardly be, since the Society is unsparing in its denunciations of the traffic in rum, notwithstanding the powers that be, ordained as they are of

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God, have taken the traffic under their peculiar guardianship. Very irreverently does your tract speak of

> "Stale debauch forth issuing from the sties
> That LAW has licensed." (No. 240.)

You are silent on slavery because, as you say, on no other subject probably "are evangelical Christians more at variance." I think, Sir, you greatly overrate the evangelical patrons and advocates of slavery. I doubt whether you can find one hundred evangelical Christians out of the slave States, unconnected in any way with slavery, slaveholders, and cotton, who will publicly avow that American Slavery is a righteous institution, and the slave code in accordance with the spirit and precepts of the gospel of Christ. Surely, surely, Sir, I should make a most extravagant and reckless estimate were I to compute the evangelical champions of slave-breeding, slave-trading, and slave-catching, at a tithe of the evangelicals who in their practice repudiate total abstinence from intoxicating drinks. Nevertheless, on this last "point of evangelical disagreement," the Society expresses itself without fear and without reserve.

But some of our friends, you may say, insist that the Bible sanctions slavery, and what can we do? And some of your friends also insist that the Bible sanctions moderate drinking and the *sale* of intoxicating drinks, and what *do* you do? Why, you tell us, "The great laws of morals are indeed unchanged, but the degrees of light and knowledge which men possess may be very different. We should not deem it right to apply our laws and knowledge in judging of the laws of Sparta, which authorized theft—nor our views of the marriage relation, to condemn the conduct of Abraham, David, and Jacob. Man's conduct is to be estimated by the light he has." To the plea that the Bible does not prohibit the traffic, it is answered, "Where is there a formal prohibition of piracy, or bigamy, or kidnapping, or suicide, or duelling, or the sale of obscene books and paintings? . . . The truth is, that the Bible has lain down great principles of conduct, which on all these subjects could be easily applied, which are applied, and which under the guidance of equal honesty may be as easily applied to the subject of which I am speaking." (No. 305.)

To assail Slavery is to assail its supporters, and you think that the Society by discussing the subject would alienate multitudes of its best friends. Similar delicacy, or, if you please, prudence, has not been observed towards the advocates of moderate drinking. "Our next opposition is from a band clothed in *white*—professors of our holy religion—enlisted soldiers of the CHURCH, engaged to every good work of benevolence: they come to intercede for the MONSTER, (moderate drinking,) and oppose our enterprise. What can be the meaning of this? Oh, where lies this astonishing witchery? What has put the CHURCH TO SLEEP? What has made her *angry* at the call to come forth from the embrace of her deadliest foe?" (No. 240.) Were the inquiry made, What witchery has made the CHURCH blind, and deaf and dumb, in regard to the groans and sufferings of millions on our soil denied the Word of God, and forcibly kept in ignorance and degradation? the true

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answer would be, I am persuaded, "the neutrality of the American Tract Society, and the vast number of the clergy to whom the fear of man has proved a snare."

Very strange is it that while the Society will not even hint dislike to slavery, it brings against the traffic in rum an array of arguments equally effective and valid against the traffic in men, women, and children. Thus you urge the duty of doing as you would be done by, and the remorse we shall feel at death for the suffering we have inflicted, and the great command to love our neighbor (No. 242)—our responsibility to God for the results of our own selfishness (No. 300)—the waste of human happiness (No. 240)—that the traffic "tears asunder the strongest bonds of society, it severs the tenderest ties of nature" (No. 249.) To the plea of the rumseller that his trade is his livelihood, it is answered, "Beg, dig, do any thing but this. It would be a glorious martyrdom to *starve*, contrasted with obtaining a livelihood by such an employment." (No. 305.) "Where have you derived authority to procure a living at a sacrifice of conscience, character, and the dearest interests of others?" (No. 239.)

The Society shrinks from the opposition it would encounter from slaveholders. In your letter already quoted, you vindicate "the *peaceful* course pursued by the Society," and you say, "when there shall be *unity of sentiment*, and a treatise of standard value shall be written, such as the Committee can approve, *then* there will be propriety in claiming that a Tract press shall engage in this branch of moral discussion." Unless I mistake your meaning, there is here an implied promise, that when all evangelical Christians are united in condemning slavery, both in theory and practice, and when of course the monster is at his last gasp, and there is no use in striking another blow, *then* the Society will attack him, provided the Committee shall cordially agree as to the weapon to be used. In the mean time, while the monster is in full vigor and extending his ravages, you think it best "that at least *one* institution should move forward on the simple errand that brought the Saviour into the world—proclaiming Christ and him crucified," &c. Happy is it, Sir, that this desire for peace, this longing to proclaim Christ and him crucified, without heeding popular and prevailing sins, was not felt by the Society till *after* it had done battle against gamblers, dancers, theatre-goers, Sabbath-breakers, moderate drinkers, and rumsellers. Your tracts against intemperance display any thing but a non-resistant spirit. For example: "The demon will daunt the timid. It is noisy and fiery; attack it, and it will roll its eyes and snap its teeth, and threaten vengeance. Attempt to starve it, and it will rage like the famished tiger. Thousands have fed it against their consciences rather than meet its fury. *But fear not.* Be firm, be decided, be courageous; connect your cause with Heaven. It is the cause of God, the cause for which Immanuel died. *Let the demon no longer hide in the sanctuary.* Expel for ever the accursed enemy, that the Lord may bless us with life and peace." (No. 240.)

Possibly the Society has deemed it its duty to coöperate with Union-Saving Committees and Baltimore politicians, and cotton merchants, in their patriotic efforts to suppress all discussion of the "delicate subject;" a dis-

cussion having such disturbing influences on Northern trade and politics. Yet such a supposition cannot be allowed, after the noble testimony borne by the Society to the right and benefit of free discussion. "There are some great principles in regard to our country which are settled, and which are never to be violated so long as our liberties are safe. Among them are these: that every subject may be subjected to candid and *most free discussion;* that public opinion, enlightened and correct, may be turned against any course of evil conduct; that public opinion is, under God, the prime source of security to our laws and morals, and that men may be induced, by *ample discussion* and by the voice of conscience and of reason, to abandon any course that is erroneous." (No. 805.) Such are the rights and benefits of discussion when directed against the *seller of rum;* do they lose all their virtue when directed against the seller of human flesh?

Perhaps your Society revolts at the idea of descending into the arena of politics; but if so, how are we to understand the following exhortation: "Let all who regard the virtue, the honor, and the patriotism of the country, *withhold their suffrages* from those candidates who offer *ardent spirits* as a bribe to secure their elevation to office." But suppose they offer as a bribe to secure their elevation to office, not a glass of brandy and water, but a fresh-discovered law of physical geography, precluding all legal restraints on the extension of human bondage—Baltimore platforms, to destroy the liberty of speech, of the press, and the pulpit—indictments for high treason, offering to the Southern Moloch the blood of Christians who, in the fear of God, refuse when summoned to join in slave-hunts—shall we withhold our suffrages?

On the whole, Sir, I cannot but think that your Society has greatly mistaken its duty to God and man, in shrinking from pronouncing slavery, as well as gambling and horse-racing, a moral evil. Unquestionably, the Society has acted in perfect accordance with the *general* policy of the Northern Church, both Popish and Protestant. That policy is more easily understood than vindicated. So intimate are our commercial relations with the South, and so dependent are our politicians for the most trifling office upon the support of their party by Southern votes, that to ask them and our merchants to participate in measures and opinions offensive to their Southern patrons, is like asking the favor of them to pluck out a right eye, or cut off a right hand. Of course, the pecuniary and party interests of these men react on the Church and religious Societies with which they are connected. Hence has grown up a secular and ecclesiastical alliance, offensive and defensive, with slavery. But this alliance, though undoubtedly embracing many worthy men, is, nevertheless, in direct antagonism with the gospel of Christ, and has consequently led, and is daily leading to most disastrous results. It has caused the avowal, by men of high position in both Church and State, of principles utterly subversive of that regard for justice and mercy which is not only one of the peculiar and beautiful features of our holy religion, but also, and especially in a Democracy, one of the strongest safeguards of person and property. Some slaveholders in Congress propose a law, the provisions of which may well have been inspired by that evil and

malignant spirit that goeth about seeking whom he may devour—a law openly setting at defiance the established rules of evidence, and levelling in the dust all the barriers erected by the common law around the personal liberty of the citizen—a law requiring every man, at the summons of a miscreant slave-catcher, to assist him in his damnable work—a law seeking by fine and imprisonment to suppress the impulses of humanity and the gushings of Christian sympathy. No sooner is this accursed law proposed than rival politicians contend for the honor of giving it their support, and no sooner is it enacted than the two great rival parties strive to gain votes for their Presidential candidates by pledging their best endeavors to carry it into execution. Many individuals, however, affirm that a law thus requiring them to participate in deeds of cruelty and injustice, is at variance with the Divine commands. Forthwith we have our public men and our party press sneering at the "higher law," and insulting all who acknowledge its paramount authority to an act of Congress; worse than all, we have our ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ descanting from their pulpits on the reverence due to the "powers that be," as ordained of God, and actually urging the duty of obedience to one of the most ungodly and execrable enactments of modern legislation. Occasionally it was indeed admitted that, under peculiar circumstances, and multiplied conditions, we ought to obey God rather than man; but at the same time it was distinctly taught, not merely that we should not *forcibly resist* the Fugitive Law, but that the "higher law" did not dispense with our obligation to catch slaves.

In the zeal, the rivalry, and the cruelty displayed in seizing the hapless and innocent fugitive and hurrying him back to the house of bondage, of mental darkness and bodily suffering, lessons of cruelty and injustice have been set by the rich and moral, which will not be lost on the needy and profligate. Many of our wealthy and influential gentlemen are sowing seeds which may yet yield to them and their children most bitter fruit.

The shocking insensibility of our churches, religious societies, and religious men, to the iniquities of slavery, of course involves them in gross inconsistencies, degrades the character of the gospel of Christ, and gives a mighty impulse to infidelity. Never before, in my opinion, has the American Church been in such peril as at present, and from almost every portion of it comes up a cry of distress. There is no failure of *money*. The country is rich, and our wealthy men are liberal, and pride and ostentation and competition secure the erection of gorgeous and expensive churches. But there is a failure of *increase* of ministers and members. The population is outgrowing the Church, and the love of many is waxing cold. From men like Tom Paine and most of his followers the Church has little to fear. They hate the gospel because their deeds are evil. Their *lives* are a sufficient antidote to their doctrines. But a new class of converts to infidelity is springing up, men whose fearless and disinterested fidelity to truth, mercy, and justice, extort unwilling respect. These men reject the gospel, not because it rebukes their vices, but because they are taught by certain of its clergy, and the conduct of a multitude of its professors, that it sanctions the most horrible cruelty and oppression, allowing the rich and powerful forcibly to reduce

the poor and helpless to the condition of working animals, articles of commerce, and to keep their posterity in ignorance and degradation to the end of time. Every argument wrested from the Bible in behalf of slavery applies to the bondage of *white* men. Hence the modern pro-slavery divinity justifies the ancient villenage and the modern serfdom, and would justify their indefinite extension. If it be right to hold three millions of human beings as chattels, it is equally right to hold hundreds of millions. Hence Christianity, if it indeed authorizes this unlimited despotism of the strong over the weak—this vast, indefinite annihilation of the conjugal and parental relations—this total abrogation of the rights of conscience, of property, of personal happiness, has surely little claim to our reverence, for its tendency to mitigate the sorrows and troubles of the present life. Certainly it is not wonderful that benevolent, well-meaning men should question the divine authority of a religion sanctioning such tremendous enormities, and whose professors recommend the catching of slaves, as a service acceptable to the Deity, when required by act of Congress.

Most orthodox, Sir, is the faith professed by the Society! I thank my God and Heavenly Father that he has given me grace to embrace with my whole heart and understanding the doctrines you denominate evangelical. But it behooves us all to remember that a workless faith is a worthless faith. Can we refuse obedience to the second of the two great commandments on which hang all the law and the prophets, and yet hope to be saved for our orthodoxy? Very properly your Society has not confined itself to the simple proclamation of Christ and him crucified, but has added practice to faith by assailing sin in its various forms, laboring to convince the sinner of his guilt, and striving to excite him to repentance and reformation. But the sin most rampant in our land—a sin which counts its victims by millions, and its perpetrators, abettors, and apologists by millions more—a sin which taints our holy things, enfeebles our churches, corrupts our statesmen, sways our judges, hardens the hearts of our people, blunts their sense of mercy and justice, and which is crowding the ranks of infidelity—this sin may not be mentioned in our fashionable pulpits to "ears polite," nor even alluded to in the multifarious publications of the American Tract Society!

And now, Sir, what is to be done? Your response of course is, NOTHING. You will be at no loss for arguments to show, that any anti-slavery action on your part will not merely diminish your receipts, and thus lessen your ability to do good, but will also prevent your tracts and volumes from conveying religious truth to the inhabitants of the slave States. The question of *duty* is not to be decided by an estimate of probable receipts. Nor is it by any means certain that your policy is the wisest in a pecuniary sense, or that one or two tracts condemning American Slavery as a moral evil would prove injurious to your treasury. The persistence of the American Board in countenancing slavery in its mission churches, in deference to the contributions of its Southern patrons, called into existence the present flourishing and efficient "American Missionary Association," daily growing in strength and public favor. This new institution is almost wholly supported by *former* subscribers to the Board. In the last report of the Board, I find the total

amount of donations received the preceding year stated at $299,703 90. Of this sum, 10,267 25 came from the slave States and the District of Columbia. Now the *last* report of the Association announces the receipt of $31,184 60 for the past year. Nearly every cent of this sum is virtually *a premium paid by the Board on its Southern subscriptions!* The American Tract Society, if I am not much mistaken, is destined to pay a premium of the like kind.

You will perhaps say that it is better our Southern brethren should be saved as slaveholders, breeders, and traders, than not at all, and therefore you will not touch the subject of slavery, because, if you do, you cannot reach them with your tracts, which under God might lead to their conversion and salvation. If this principle be correct, it is of wide application. The Territory of Utah is acquiring a large population, and will soon claim admission into the Union. The people are polygamists, but it is better they should be saved as such than not at all. Hence it becomes the duty of the Society, for fear of offending them, to avoid all allusion to the Christian doctrine of marriage, and to "move forward on the simple errand that brought the Saviour into the world, proclaiming Christ and him crucified," and thus rendering the tracts acceptable and useful to our Mormon brethren. So, also, as the usefulness of the minister of Christ depends on his message being heard, he ought to preach smooth things, lest, by offending his people, by telling them unwelcome truths, he drive them beyond the sound of the gospel.

I believe, Sir, not only that this reasoning is unsound, but that the apprehension on which it is founded is groundless. It is not desired by any that your institution should be converted into an Anti-slavery any more than into an Anti-gambling Tract Society. All that is asked is, that this great and influential Christian Association should publicly dissent from the impious claim made by the advocates of American slavery, that this vast mass of accumulated sin and misery is sanctioned by the God of mercy and justice, and allowed by the crucified Redeemer; in other words, that American slavery should share in the condemnation you bestow on "the theatre, the circus, and the horse-race."

Were you to issue one or two tracts against American slavery as a moral evil, will it be seriously contended that thenceforth none of your thousands of publications on other subjects would be allowed to cross the frontiers of the slave region? Recollect, Sir, that when a human chattel of three years will bring $300 at auction, and its two parents from $1,500 to $2,000, slaves are and must be the possession only of the *rich*. By the census of 1840, (I have not the last at hand,) there were in the slave States, 1,016,307 white males over twenty years of age, and of these, various data assure me it is a *very liberal* estimate, that 200,000 were the holders of slaves. And is it possible, Sir, that of this prodigious majority of non-slaveholders, none will read any of your biographies and religious treatises, because they may have heard that you have published one or two little tracts against a sin of which they are themselves guiltless? When "Uncle Tom's Cabin" is sold and read at the South, is it credible that a few slaveholders can exclude all your

millions of pages from the vast Southern region? Can your agents and colporteurs be excluded from fifteen States of this Union, because, of the mighty mass of your publications, twenty or thirty pages are directed against the conduct of a few rich men? The apprehension that, should the Society be faithful to the calls of duty, its efficiency for good would be impaired, is not, in my opinion, consistent with that Christian faith so forcibly inculcated in many of your tracts. For myself, I firmly believe that before long the Society will find its present policy productive not of strength, but of weakness. That policy has given birth to the "American Reform Tract and Book Society." In a late acknowledgment of receipts by this infant institution, I observe contributions from no less than eight States.

To me it seems obvious that Christians entertaining such contradictory views of the divine attributes of the spirit of the gospel and of Christian obligation as are involved in the justification and condemnation of American slavery, cannot much longer act together in sending missionaries to preach, or employing the press to inculcate a religion respecting the fundamental moral principles of which the two parties entertain such antagonistic opinions.

It is one of the incidents of our imperfect state, that sincere Christians often think they are doing God service, while pursuing opposite paths, and when of course one or the other must tend in a wrong direction. May we accord to others the charity we ask for ourselves; and I pray God that those who condemn in others the sin of oppressing their brethren may feel their own unworthiness, and remember that they themselves, no less than the wretched slave-catcher, need to be washed in that blood which alone cleanseth from all sin.

I am, Rev. Sir, your obed't servant,

WILLIAM JAY.

INDIAN MISSIONS.

NEW-YORK, 8th March, 1853.

DEAR SIR:—I have read with great pain the exposure, in a late number of the *American Missionary*, of the conduct of the American Board in relation to the Choctaw and Cherokee Indians. This powerful Society has established missions in these two tribes of our Aborigines, who have so far advanced in civilization and the adoption of "our institutions" as to hold and use certain of their fellow-men as beasts of burden. The missionaries sent among these people, instead of teaching them the Christian duties of justice and mercy, have virtually instructed them that they might be good Christians without loving their neighbors, or doing to others as they would others should do unto them. Says a Secretary of the Board, who had visited the missions, "It does not seem to have been the aim of the brethren [missionaries] to exert any direct influence, either by their public or private teachings, upon the system of slavery."

In the last Report we find the Board extolling their converts as saints, and eulogizing the governments established by these slaveholding Indians, although tolerating and perpetrating atrocities unknown to the despotisms of Europe.

We are told, (p. 29,) "The Choctaws have a GOOD GOVERNMENT. They have a written constitution, with a declaration of rights, which embodies the liberty of the press, trial by jury, the rights of conscience, proper safeguards of person and property, the equality of Christian denominations, and almost every great principle of civil and religious freedom."

Certainly the Board are by no means ultra in their ideas of civil and religious freedom, and the rights of conscience. What is the religious freedom of their own missionaries? "If any citizen of the United States," says a law of this good government, "acting as A MISSIONARY OR PREACHER, or whatever his occupation may be, is found to take an active part in favoring the principles and notions of the most fatal and destructive doctrines of the abolitionists, he shall be compelled to leave the nation, and for ever stay out of it." Of course, men of God like Wesley, Hopkins, and Edwards, are disqualified from preaching the gospel among the Choctaws; for such men would not, like the missionaries of the Board, consent to be gagged on the obligation to do justice and love mercy. Not only must these missionaries be dumb on the iniquities of slavery, but they can remain at their posts only on condition of not violating the law of CASTE, since the statute de-

clares that allowing slaves to "sit at table with them shall be ground to *convict* persons of favoring the principles and notions of abolitionism." So, if a missionary presumes to eat with a slave, perhaps his spiritual son in the gospel, he is to be expelled the nation, and ever stay out of it! and so he is if he dares to teach a slave to read the Bible without the consent of his master! This good government provides "*proper safeguards of person and property*," by enacting that a slave shall possess *no property*, and that his *person* shall be a vendible article. "Civil *freedom*" is secured by a law which declares that if any *free* negroes shall return into the nation, "*they shall be seized and sold to the highest bidder for life*." By another law, any free negro presuming to enter and remain in the nation is to *receive one hundred lashes on his bare back*, and to forfeit all the property he may possess!

We are officially assured (p. 32) that "the Cherokees have AN EXCELLENT GOVERNMENT: the usual safeguards for person, property, the rights of conscience, &c., are provided." This same excellent government deprives of all the rights of citizenship every child of a *red* man by a black or yellow wife; declares *void* every marriage of the kind, and subjects the parties to *scourging!* Whoever teaches a slave, or any *free negro*, not of Cherokee blood, to read or write, is to be fined from $100 to $500. This exception in favor of negroes of their own blood is a natural prejudice which our more civilized slaveholders have most effectually conquered. In our Christian slave codes we find no favor whatever shown to negroes of Anglo-Saxon blood. Free negroes are to be expelled from the nation.

And now I ask what is the inference to be drawn from this strange, false, blundering, but official eulogy of these Indian slaveholding governments? Why, that the slave codes of our Southern States, with all their execrable wickedness, crushing in the dust THREE MILLIONS of immortal beings, are perfectly compatible with *good and excellent* government! Even the government of South Carolina, under which *more than one half* of the whole population, men, women, and children, are articles of merchandize, and robbed of every civil and religious right, is a proper subject of Christian eulogy! What amount of tyranny, cruelty, and wickedness constitutes a *bad* government, we are not informed. Certainly the Board has relieved itself from all suspicion of anti-slavery fanaticism, and has proved itself deserving the pecuniary patronage of our "Southern brethren." A few years since, in consequence of pressure from without, it announced to the public that "it can sustain no relation to slavery which implies approbation of the system, and as a Board can have no connection or sympathy with it." But, like many others, the Board has since "conquered its prejudices."

It may be asked, Would you abandon these Indians to heathenism because they are slaveholders? I answer, I would not present the gospel to these or any other people in such a form as to lead them to believe that Christianity authorized *them* to abandon to heathenism the poor and oppressed among them, by subjecting them to enforced ignorance and degradation; and this is what the Board is virtually doing. But why prefer preaching the gospel under a gag to preaching it with perfect freedom to other Indians

who hold no slaves? Had the missionaries, with Christian firmness and fidelity, pointed out to these Indians the wickedness of their laws, and the inconsistency of their slaveholding with the precepts of Christianity, they would no doubt have done great good; and had they been expelled for their fidelity, they would have honored Christ by suffering in his cause, instead of bringing a reproach on his religion by their time-serving policy. In such a case, the Board would have lost some, perhaps all, their Southern subscribers; but what amount of subscriptions will compensate for the virtual although silent abrogation among these Indian converts of the second of the two great commandments on which hang all the law and the prophets, so far as it affects their obligations to men not colored like themselves?

I cannot persuade myself that we are justified in the sight of God in concealing any divine command or prohibition, for the purpose of rendering the gospel more palatable to those to whom we present it. I have heretofore occasionally contributed to the funds of the American Board, but can do so no more; and I rejoice that in sending you the enclosed check* I have the full assurance that I am in no degree strengthening influences adverse to the right, happiness, and religious improvement of an afflicted portion of the human family.

Yours faithfully,

WILLIAM JAY

LEWIS TAPPAN, ESQ.,
Treasurer of the American Missionary Association.

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* For One Hundred Dollars.